

Mr. David Ignatius, foreign editor
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, DC 20071

2/7/93

Dear Mr. Ignatius,

The inference of the headline, "Israel Revives Its Garrison Mentality," is the thrust of another prejudicial and misinformative Post story on the Middle East. It tells its readers that Israel is paranoid without cause, evil in ~~its~~ unprecedented misbehavior in the deportations of those Palestinians, unreasonable in negotiations and despite its fears hasn't a damned thing to worry about.

None of this is true and all of it consistent with the Post's reporting for many years, reporting that grew less honest when the Post, which should have known better and was soon told the truth, propagandized the administration's falsity, that Arafat had recognized the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security.

In common with all our media the Post treats these deportations as both wrong and unprecedented. Yet within my lifetime it has been the practise of many major powers, including the United States. It simply is not honest journalism, I believe, for the Post and the rest of those who support administration policy and interpretations of agreements, to give those who depend on the media for what they know - the essence of representative society - to believe that these deportations are unprecedented.

The Post has done this and you as foreign editor bear your share of responsibility for it.

I doubt there is one in 10,000 of your readers who know and fewer who remembered the massive and illegal scale on which we did this in the Palmer/Hoover-driven hysteria after World War I, where there was no danger at all to the country from those deported even if all had been what the government pretended, as many if not most were not.

We did this at Eniwetok so we could make that island home of all those innocents uninhabitable and we did it ^{on} a truly massive ^{scale} in Viet Nam - with those we did not just kill instead.

To drive home the point of Israel's bad ~~behavior~~ ^{behavior} and unreasonableness Hoffman, without even selecting a biased source, states, "The threats to its existence have all but abated."

This is what the Post learned from what it reported of Iraq's CW stocks and the means for delivering them? The Scuds of which it may still have some and those, improved in accuracy and range that among many other deadly arms Syria, which is not threatened by any neighbor, has obtained and continues to obtain? This is what it learned from what it has reported of Saudi Arabia's greatly expanded air force? With planes that have the capability I've not seen reported by the Post, of reach^{ing} Greece?

There is much more of this for which I do not take your time or mine.

Can you think of any precedent for the entire Muslim world insisting on preserving a state of war with Israel, Egypt only excepted, after losing all those wars with it?

Or of any reason consistent with reaching a peace agreement with Israel for doing so?

Not inconsistent with this is Hoffman's writing that was not clarified in editing in which he said that Dayan said in the Pentagon "that Israel faced annihilation from its neighbors, yet had an army so strong it could be in Damascus in a week". (That was in the 1950s, too, and it ignores the extensive rearming by Syria and all the other states at war with Israel.)

Do you as an editor believe that this seeming inconsistency did not require the Post's making sense of it for its readers?

Or is it that if the Post had it would have raised questions about this story and so many others like it?

Would it not have suggested to at least some readers that Israel and Israelis would be crazy not to live with what you were really taking about, a siege rather than a "garrison mentality"?

Bearing on this is what I think I informed you about and know I did others on the Post, contemporaneously and subsequently, that when pressed hard for US recognition Arafat was asked to recognize the State of Israel, and that in terms of the UN resolutions to which the Post uniformly refers selectively, he absolutely refused to do that. When instead he said he recognized the right of the "people" of Israel to live in peace and security, which is not the same thing at all, the Post and the administration simply lied and said he had recognized the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security, within safe and secure borders.

But if he had said what the administration demanded of him, did the Post tell its readers that the PLO had refused to alter its charter to state this and that its charter still calls for driving Israelis into the sea?

You quote the pollster as saying this is "a people with a siege mentality" in reporting that almost 70 percent of polled Israelis believe that "If they could...the Arabs would drive Israel(sic) into the sea."

And so, according to this pollster who says what the Post wanted to report, from its long record of such reporting and for this story, Israelis "remain distrustful of the world around them."

The world that, as Israelis and their government know and the Post never reports, judges Israel as it does not judge itself or want to be judged.

The deportations are but one example of this. There are many!

Has the Post ever seriously, honestly and impartially, for all the great amount of space it has devoted to the terrible and tragic situation in that area of the world even given its readers any understanding at all of why that situation exists or of the history of "negotiations" going back to the British 1937 commission, a series of proposed settlements to all of which Jews and Israel later agreed and all of which, until Camp David, all Muslim

countries without exception rejected out of hand?

In even the current farce of negotiations, has the Post told its readers that the Israelis again offered the Camp David terms and finds them now rejected? Or that those with whom they are "negotiating" are demanding the achieving of the maximum they can hope to obtain as a precondition to any serious discussion?

Or that no ruler who has agreed to Israel's existence has survived? You may not remember Abdullah, but you surely remember Sadat!

And the countless Arabs murdered by Arabs for merely talking to Israelis.

The United States has pressured Israel into an impossible position and the Post supports this uncritically and without any questioning of it at all.

But suppose, just suppose, that the parties supposedly negotiating with Israel now reach an agreement. Does that bind the other countries at war with Israel, those who have financed all the terrorism of which many United States citizens have been the victims along with innumerable Israelis?

Would that agreement bind Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and all the other countries still at war with Israel of which these three have the capability of bombing Israel from within their own territory, with rockets, planes or both? With the weapon of mass destruction to which they do have access, CEW?

Would that end the terrorism the attempt to respond to which created the present situation? (And how would this country react to something like that? How would you? Or the Post? Do you think our people would be complacent if our government did nothing at all?)

I am very disappointed in you and in the Post. And, unfortunately, what history tells us to expect when the major media are blind supporters of government positions that are so often controlled by perceived political needs rather than fairness of justice or only too often decency.

Separate from all of this but a real real consideration is what the actualities of life - and of death - would be in Israel if it did not control what is now called "The West Bank" rather than where all Jews come from, without any explanation of that "west bank" description. With the history of all of Israel's neighbors giving sanctuary to those determined to inflict serious harm at the very least on Israel, do the Post's readers have any basis for understanding what the Post told them, these actualities would be? How much of the land within the borders of the State of Israel would be subject to attack from those Arab lands? Without an Arab crossing that border? Or what this actuality was before it controlled Judea and Samaria?

Israel should not feel that most of the world is against it? The world that does not demand the return of territory and peoples from what was the USSR to Poland, or from Poland to Germany and much more like this within your lifetime?

When our people are not fully and honestly informed on major issues, representative society itself is at stake.

And when papers like the Post do not tell them, how are people to learn?

The Post is in a unique position because it, more than any other paper, informs those in the Congress and in the executive agencies,

When it fails, as on this issue it has ^{failed} and does, the failure is of greater consequence and potential.

More than any other paper, because of its unique position, the Post should not be an unofficial arm of government. And more than any other it ought assume the traditional responsibility and role of our press in reporting the truth and in criticizing government. This is even more important ~~than~~ these days when our government has ^s made us gendarmes to the world.

It is true, as Santayana said, that those who do not learn from the past are doomed to relive it.

The tragedy is that this country can and does doom others to that so deadly reliving! Hoffman's story is neither fair nor honest. It is a work of propaganda. It seems to be timed to be a ~~press~~ prelude to further pressures on Israel. Which has yet to get any kind of meaningful concession from its "partners" in these "negotiations."

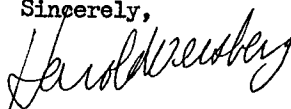
About which the Post has yet to report honestly, fairly or in any way that can inform those who depend on it with any degree of fullness.

I am very sorry that the Post again and you again have failed to report this very dangerous situation fairly or honestly, leave alone with any fullness to give your readers a decent understanding of what is involved.

Sorry my typing can't be any better and that I do not have time to rewrite this. And that there are so many other considerations neither our government nor the Post has yet addressed, like

how it can be possible for the negotiations, if they continue, ^{to} ~~can~~ provide any meaningful guarantee of peace within secure borders for Israel and its people. Or how such "friends" of the U.S. as Saudi Arabia can be persuaded to end their financing and other encouragement to those who make it ^oimpossible.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg